



PEI Federation of Labour Newsletter September 2006 Issue

Current News

□ On Friday, November 3 and Saturday, November 4, the PEI Federation of Labour will hold its 42nd annual convention at the Howard Johnson's Dutch Inn in North River. The following positions will be up for election at convention: President, Secretary, and VP (women). If your local wishes to submit a resolution to convention please contact our office at 368-3068; fax at 368-3192 or e-mail at: peifed@pei.aibn.com. The deadline for resolutions will be October 4, 2006. Guest Speakers at this year's convention will include: CLC Secretary-Treasurer, Hassan Yussuff; PSAC National Executive Vice-President Patty Ducharme who will speak on this year's theme of Fighting Privatisation and Contracting out; Scott Sinclair who will speak on the research he is doing on Atlantica; UPSE's Second Vice President, Eileen LeClair(who will speak on the Silent Witness Program), NDP Leader, Dean Constable; Representatives from the United Way and the Minister Responsible for Labour, Elmer Mac Fadyen.

□ Recently, the PEI Federation of Labour received a request from Elmer MacFadyen, Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs announcing that effective December 31, 2006, the terms of 2 worker representatives on the Workers Compensation Board of Directors, will expire and requesting that we submit names for those positions. In the letter, the Minister asks the federation to indicate why we believe our nominees would be good candidates as Board members. Therefore, If you have any members interested in being considered as nominees for these positions, we ask you to submit their name, phone number, address, and a short list of any training, experience, and/or positions held that shows interest and experience in workers compensation and health and safety issues. Submit nominations by email at: peifed@pei.aibn.com; by Fax at: 368-3192. The deadline for nominations will be before 4:30pm on Wednesday, October, 25, 2006.

□ On Friday, September 29, it was announced that the Canadian Labour and Business Centre (CLBC), Canada's longest standing business and labour forum on labour market and skills issues will be closing its doors due to the Harper government's decision to discontinue funding for one of our main initiatives, the Workplace Partners Panel. The CLBC was Co-chaired by Canadian Labour Congress President Ken Georgetti and

Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters President and CEO Perrin Beatty. The Federation had been participating in their Workplace Partners Panel Atlantic Canada Task Force on the skill challenges facing Canada.

□ On Thursday, September 28, it was announced that the members of CUPE local 804 which represents workers in the recreation, water and sewer and public works departments for the City of Summerside have voted 78 % in favour of a new 5-year contract. The new deal will see wages increase by a total of 15.03% by the end of the contract which ends on March 31, 2011. Other things gained include improvements in the part-time, casual and temporary employee language as well as better service pay, vacation leave and workplace safety language.

□ On Tuesday, September 26, opposition Bloc Québécois and Liberal MPs joined the NDP in supporting the NDP introduced Early Learning and Child Care Act, Bill 303, at its second reading in the House of Commons. The bill aims to boost child care from a patchwork of services to a national program through a law similar to the Canada Health Act. The bill would ensure reliable funding for the provinces , require those funds to be invested in not-for-profit centres and help ensure accountability in how the money is spent by the provinces. Committee hearings on the bill are expected in December or January.

□ On Saturday, September 23, it was announced that migrant farm workers at three farms in Quebec and one in Manitoba have voted to join the UFCW. Application hearings will be held before the Quebec Labour Relations Commission on Sept. 24 and before the Manitoba Labour Relations Board before the end of October. If approved, workers at the four farms will be able to bargain for improved wages and working conditions for the first time, which up until now have been set by the Mexican and Canadian governments under the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. The workers are typically paid minimum wage and many of them are subjected to very poor working and housing conditions. Every year nearly 18,000 workers from Mexico and Caribbean countries are brought to Canada to help plant and harvest crops. Most migrant workers are employed in Ontario, but they are banned from joining a union under provincial legislation.

□ On Saturday, September 23, CUPE Local 2523 (Atlantic Baptist Nursing Home) held a dinner at the Dutch Inn to celebrate their 25th anniversary. The event was well attended and was highlighted by various speakers sharing their memories of the struggles they had with management as they tried to form the Local. Vice-President Blair Penny attended the event as an invited guest on behalf of the Federation. The Federation would like to congratulate the local for reaching this important milestone and wish them many more.

□ On Friday, September 22, the Federal Conservative Government announced that it will

reject the recommendations from a two year federal review of pay equity in Canada, which detailed the need for proactive pay equity legislation to bring Canada in-line with its national and international obligations to human rights.. This is very disappointing considering women in Canada still earn only 72.5 cents for every dollar a man earns and the current legislation has proven to be ineffective, time consuming, and extremely expensive. The CEP just recently settled their pay equity battle for its Bell operators after a 14-year ordeal and extremely long and complicated legal wrangle that saw Bell take the CEP through almost 30 federal court appeals and one supreme court of Canada appeal.

❑ On Thursday, September 21, it was announced that Shelley Ward defeated incumbent President Sandy MacKay by 87 votes to become the new President of the Union of Public Sector Employees. Shelley Ward received 1246 votes (52%) while Sandy MacKay received 1159 votes (48%). There were 24 spoiled ballots. Ms. Ward will officially begin her three-year term during the 30 day transition period following the union's annual convention in November.

❑ On Thursday, September 21, Provincial and territorial governments released the National Pharmaceuticals Strategy Progress Report to the public. The report provides recommendations to implement a multi-year strategy to improve access to drug therapies, help ensure the affordability of prescription drugs and work towards sustainability of the public health care system. The Progress Report addresses challenges and opportunities in five priority areas: Catastrophic drug coverage, Expensive drugs for rare diseases, Common national formulary, Real world drug safety and effectiveness, and Drug pricing and purchasing strategies. The next phase of the National Pharmaceuticals Strategy will see further opportunities for stakeholder engagement, as well as ongoing dialogue among governments. The full National Pharmaceuticals Strategy Progress Report is available online at www.nps-snpp.ca. The Federation has been lobbying the provincial government and the Island MP's to adopt a national pharmaceutical program.

❑ On Thursday, September 21, members of the P.E.I. Nurses Union voted 64% in favour of accepting a new contract. The agreement includes an 8.75 % wage increase over the 3 year contract, retroactive to April 1, 2005. The deal also includes: top up benefits to EI for maternity and parental leave, new compensation for senior nurses who mentor new nurses, improved employer contributions to the nurses' education fund, and a first description of the role of nurse practitioners.

❑ On Wednesday, September 20, it was announced that The Quebec government has struck a deal on pay equity with the province's 36,000 public day-care workers, after months of tense negotiations over equal pay for equal work. Quebec has agreed to an 8.8 per cent pay increase over the next five years for the province's day-care workers, most of whom are women. The deal means the average worker will earn an extra \$4,000 a

year, above their current salary. That works out to a slight increase in hourly wages for day-care workers, who will go from earning an average of \$15.50 to \$16.90 per hour. Pay equity has been required by law in Quebec since 1997, but it has taken several years of talks between the government and unions to work out the details.

- ❑ On Wednesday, September 20, United Way labour representative Ken Clavette presented CUPE National President Paul Moist with a plaque honouring CUPE's members for donating more than \$1 million to the United Way this year.

- ❑ On Tuesday, September 19, an economic study titled Employment Implications of Trade Liberalization With East Asia was released in Ottawa. The study raises major concerns over the impact of a Canada-Korea Free Trade deal, including the loss of more than 33,000 Canadian manufacturing jobs. The study also indicates that our current trade with East Asia results in the net loss of over 180,000 Canadian jobs. Most of this job loss is due to our trade with China, but significant jobs losses also result from our current trade with Korea and Japan. Strategic, high-technology sectors such as computers, machinery, and transportation equipment (especially motor vehicles) have experienced the worst of the job losses – contrary to the traditional assumption that only ‘low-technology’ sectors such as clothing and footwear will lose out under trade liberalization. To read the complete text of the study go to:
www.caw.ca/campaigns&issues/on_goingcampaigns/korea/index.asp

- ❑ On Tuesday, September 12, it was announced that the Nova Scotia Labour board has ruled that the District Health Authorities’ assertion that CUPE was bargaining in bad faith by trying to negotiate improvements to the NSAHO (Nova Scotia Association of Health Organizations) pension plan had no merit. Five unions representing more than 20,000 health care workers will be affected by the decision. The health care employers use of tens of millions of dollars of the plan’s surplus since 1998 to make their own contributions is a major bone of contention with the unions. The unions claim the partial contribution holidays were not only unfair to plan members but were also taken in breach of the Plan Text. They have joined together in this round of bargaining to make sure the practice is brought to an end and other improvements to the plan are put in place.

- ❑ On Saturday, September 9, 2006, it was announced that the unemployment rate on PEI for August was 10.9% down 0.3% from July’s 11.2%. You currently need 525 hours to qualify for EI on PEI.

- ❑ On Monday, September 4, unfortunately for the first time in 7 years, the Federation’s Labour Day Barbecue and Corn boil had to be cancelled due to rain. The Federation was actually trying to get a big tent for the event this year but unfortunately things fell

through at the last minute. On a good note the Federation was able to give a rather large donation of food to the Upper Room in Charlottetown. The donation included the 1200 hotdogs and buns, 35 dozen corn, case of butter, and various condiments that the Federation had bought for the event. The Federation would like to thank all those who worked so hard to organize this year's event. We would also like to thank Carpenter's Local 1338, PSAC Area Council, and PSAC Local 90001 for their generous monetary donations and CUPW, Carpenter's Local 1338, UPSE, IBEW local 1432, and the CLC for their prize donations.

☐ On Monday, September 4, The Canadian Labour Congress launched the next phase of their nationwide campaign to convince Parliament to adopt Bill C-257 which will prohibit the use of scabs (often called replacement workers by management) during labour disputes in workplaces under the jurisdiction of the Canada Labour Code. Bill C-257 will come up for vote in the House of Commons on October 25th. Over the next six weeks, the CLC will make every possible effort to make sure unionized workers contact their MP and let them know they expect them to vote in favour of anti-scab legislation. Today 97% of labour negotiations in Canada are concluded without the disruption of a strike or lockout. Yet on the few occasions where employers have used scabs the result has often been prolonged and sometimes violent labour disputes such as the Ekati Mine in the Northwest Territories, Lakeside Packers in Alberta, Seimans in Southwestern Ontario, Telus, and Videotron. Similar limits are already in place in British Columbia and Quebec. Both have realized smoother labour relations and substantially fewer days of work lost to strikes or lockouts. For more information on this important issue please visit [http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/antiscab legislation](http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/antiscab_legislation).

☐ On Monday, August 28, the California state assembly voted 43-30 in favour of Bill 840 which would outlaw private health care throughout the state. If adopted, the bill which is inspired by Canada's national medicare system, would provide free medical, dental, vision and prescription drug coverage for all California residents by 2009 through a state-run agency. Unfortunately, State Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has announced that he will veto the Bill. San Francisco has already gone ahead with its own version of universal care. In August, Mayor Gavin Newsom signed a law that would make the city the first in the U.S. to offer health care to its 82,000 uninsured residents. It is estimated seven million California residents (out of a population of 37 million) have no health care coverage at all. Across the country some 50 million Americans (one out of six) lack coverage of any kind and many more live without adequate coverage.

Report from the Federation's 2nd Annual Book Donation

☐ On Tuesday, September 5, at the Confederation Centre Library in Charlottetown, Federation President Carl Pursey officially presented this year's donation of books on

labour and social issues to Alan Groen, Chief Librarian of the Provincial Library, and Noreen Hanus, Chief Librarian at UPEI. This year's donation contained a total of approximately 40 books and cds and was valued at more than \$1,000.00.

☐The federation would like to thank Executive Council member , Leo Cheverie and CLC rep JC Basque for their continued efforts on this project. We would also like to thank CUPE PEI Division, CUPE Local 501, CUPE Local 1870, UPSE, and CUPW for their generous monetary donations.

☐For pictures taken at the donation ceremony and a list of books donated please go to <http://www.peifl.ca/pages/press/presbook06.html>.

- Here is the press release that the federation released in conjunction with the donation.

☐" We consider it to be very important for the general public to have access to material that addresses labour and social issues." Carl Pursey, President of the PEI Federation of Labour.

-On Tuesday, September 5th at 10:00 a.m. at the Confederation Centre Library, corner of Queen and Richmond Street, the PEI Federation of Labour made a donation of books to the PEI Provincial library and to the UPEI Library valued at more than \$1,000.00.

-" Public libraries are a vital component in providing free access to information for not only our children but also for all citizens in our province. For us, having free access to information is one of the most important cornerstones to educating all Islanders so that they are able to make informed and enlightened decisions that will shape the direction of PEI's future." stated Mr. Pursey

-The Labour movement has always fought and will continue to fight to make sure that governments provide sufficient funding and resources for public institutions such as libraries to make sure that the public continues to receive access to the best books and material available.

-" The labour movement is continuing to publish or help publish material on issues important to all Canadians that sometimes is not as easily available to the public as we would like. Therefore in our donation we will supply our Island libraries with material that ranges from books on Canadian labour history in the last 100 years, to books on personal stories of involvement in the labour movement, health and safety issues, women's issues and a range of books on contemporary social issues. Our donation also contains the most recent year of publications by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives."

- "We make these donations at this time of year to mark not only Labour Day on September 4th but also to signify Labour's support for Literacy on International Literacy Day which is celebrated on September 8th " states Pursey. He further states that "We affirm our support for all public institutions which like libraries help strengthen our communities."

This Second Labour Day donation is our modest effort at providing the general public with material that are not available right now to them in our libraries and we would like to take this opportunity to thank all the unions and organizations who donated so generously to this important project and those who worked so hard to make this donation possible.

"We plan to continue to make donations like this on a regular basis in the future. concludes Mr. Pursey

Report From the Federation's Municipal Campaign Launch News Conference

□ On Thursday, September 28, the Federation along with the Mac Killop Center for Social Justice held a press conference to unveil the details of its 2006 Charlottetown Municipal Election Campaign and the Putting Citizen's First Leaflet. To start the conference CLC Rep JC Basque introduced Federation Vice President Blair Penny and Mac Killop Center for Social Justice Representative, Mary Boyd. Blair and Mary then went on to read the press release concerning the campaign and answer questions from the assembled press members.

-If you wish to see a picture from the conference or get the electronic version of the leaflet please go to <http://www.peifl.ca/pages/press/presmunconf.html>. If you would like physical copies of the leaflet please contact our office by phone at 368-3068 and we will make sure you get some. Thus far approximately 3,000 physical leaflets have been distributed to unions and community organizations and many more have been sent out digitally through e-mail.

-The federation would like to thank Eileen Brown Wilt and all those who have ordered leaflets for all their efforts in making sure that the leaflet gets a wide distribution.

-Here is the press release that was read at the conference:

Upcoming Municipal Elections - Charlottetown

-As we all know, decisions taken by civic politicians fundamentally affect the living standards of all citizens, whether they be union members or not.

-The budgets of local governments are growing to meet the increasing needs and demands of the population. The quality of our air, water, sewage, transportation, recreation, housing and others services is largely determined by our city council, men and women from our community.

-More and more municipalities like Charlottetown are faced with new realities; be it insufficient funding to provide services, increased poverty, arrival of newcomers, environmental issues due to climate change, etc.

-Our municipal council will have to take some important decisions in the near future and ordinary citizens need to be part of these decisions.

-We need strong and progressive voices on municipal issues and at municipal council speaking in the interests of workers and their families. The PEI Federation of Labour, in conjunction with community groups wish to be a part of those voices.

-Our Federation has decided to get involved in the upcoming November 6, 2006 municipal election in Charlottetown. Our involvement in municipal politics is the natural extension of our work at the federal and provincial levels on behalf of workers and their families.

What are we going to do?

-Our first activity- was to organize a forum entitled: Charlottetown, Present and Future challenges for our city. Participants at this Forum helped us identified key issues we believe are important for our city.

-Our second activity is today -We want to let the public know that they can make a difference in this election. The issues identified at the Forum became part of the leaflet you have in your hand. This leaflet will be distributed throughout workplaces and community groups in Charlottetown. With this leaflet we are not telling citizens who to vote for but are asking them to think about the issues and ask questions to candidates when they meet them.

What are these issues

1- Democracy - More and more citizens want to have a real input in the decisions taken by city council

2- Public services - Public opinion polls show that Canadians overwhelmingly believe that their local government should handle public services not private companies. We are

certain that Islanders also agree.

3- Poverty - There is poverty in our city. Perhaps its not always visible but we know that many workers are living on wages that don't necessarily cover even their families basic needs and a lot of citizens on fixed income are certainly having a hard time making ends meet.

4- Environment- Our city is faced with some pressing environmental issues, be it pesticides, parks, cruise ships, transportation, etc. We believe the environment is an issue that will need more and more attention in the next four years

5- Newcomers - As our population ages, our society will rely more and more on newcomers. Charlottetown needs to do its utmost to make them feel welcome as they become accustomed to their new city.

-Our third activity will be the endorsement process - We believe that candidates should be open and tell the voters what they stand for and what they are going to work for at city hall. To know them and their intentions better, we intend to meet with all the candidates that are interested in meeting with us and ask them a number of questions that are linked to the issues that have come out of our recent forum. At the end of this process, we will produce an endorsement card where we tell the public who we believe would make a good councilor.

-This card will again be distributed throughout the workplaces and community groups in Charlottetown.

-Finally, this endorsement card will also be the basis for following the decisions and actions taken by the councilors who were endorsed.

1. We believe that by our involvement in this manner we will increase the interest of Charlottetown citizens in the November election.

2. We also believe that our participation in this election will help citizens make better choices because they will have a chance to discuss with their co-workers and their families some very important issues.

3. We are certain that after this process, we will have a better and new city council on November 6th.

Thank you and we are open for questions

The Federation's Response to the Federal Government's Recent Cuts

□ On Monday, September 25, at the same time the federal government announced a \$13 billion surplus, they also announced \$1 billion worth of cuts to programs over the next two years as part of their \$2-billion savings plan. The cuts came in a variety of areas mostly in areas that go against the Harper government's ideological views.

The Cuts include:

- Elimination of the program that gave GST rebates to tourists which will eliminate at least 50-60 jobs at the Summerside Tax Centre.
- Adult Learning and Literacy Programs are being cut by \$17.7 million which will mean \$425,000 worth of cuts to literacy programs on PEI.
- The Court Challenges program is eliminated to save \$5.6 million
- \$5 million cut from the Status of Women Canada
- \$55.4 million cut from Youth Employment Programs
- \$17.6 million cut from the Workplace Skills Program
- Canadian Labour Business Centre has been eliminated. The federation had been participating in their Workplace Partners Panel Atlantic Canada Task Force on the skill challenges facing Canada.
- \$3 million cut from the Canada Policy Research Networks
- \$4.6 million cut from the Museums Assistance Program
- \$9.7 million cut from the Canadian Volunteerism Initiative
- \$9.1 million cut from the School of Public Service
- and \$7.6 million cut to grants and contributions to environmental groups

-In response to these cuts the Federation sent out the following press release:

-“ We are asking Premier Binns to use his influence with Steven Harper to make him understand that his cuts will have a real negative impact on Island workers” stated Blair Penny, Vice-President of the PEI Federation of Labour

-The PEI Federation of Labour cannot understand how the Federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty can defend announcing a \$13 billion dollars surplus and at the same time propose slashing \$ 1 billion from programs. Especially when these cuts are done with no debate in the House of Commons.

-“We also have a great deal of difficulty in understanding how the cutting of 50-60 jobs from the Tax Centre in Summerside, the reduction of funding for literacy programs, the elimination of assistance to non profit organizations from ACOA, and the elimination of the Court Challenges Program allowing women and minority groups to contest decisions

of their Federal and Provincial governments, will address the priorities of working families on PEI ”, says Mr. Penny.

-For Kevin McAdam to say in Thursday’s Guardian that no workers will lose their job at the Summerside Tax Centre, that all cuts will be done by attrition is very condescending to Island workers. What Mr. MacAdam does not seem to understand is that attrition means not replacing workers who are retiring and not filling up vacant positions; the end result is job loss. It is estimated that when you add in the approximately 40 positions recently transferred to Winnipeg and Halifax to the cuts; at least 100 good jobs will disappear from the Island economy.

-And how, at a time, when not only Island employers but also employers across Canada are talking about skills shortages and the critical need to invest in skills that will help in building both a productive and competitive workforce, can the new federal government decide that cutting funding and abandoning programs aimed at raising the skill levels of our workforce will benefit PEI.

-“Raising the basic numeracy and literacy of these workers – which means investing in adult learning and literacy programs – would do more to raise overall productivity and address the shortage of skilled workers than any tax cut in the next budget,” said Penny.

-Also, The elimination of the Court Challenges Program will make it very hard for women and minority groups in PEI to fight for their rights against the government .

-“In the end, what is most outrageous in the position of Finance Minister Flaherty is that in his statement on these cuts, he speaks of ‘cutting the fat’, as if the poor, our youth, women, Natives, volunteers and Federal employees of this country constituted a surplus of fat to be cut”, added Mr. Penny.

-With these cuts the Harper government has shown that it values its right wing ideology far above the working people of PEI. In a time of plenty in Ottawa, for the Federal government to deliver such mean spirited cuts is reprehensible in the opinion of the PEI Federation of Labour.

-“We are asking Premier Binns to speak up on behalf of Islanders and condemn these cuts.” concludes Mr. Penny.

Important Dates

Deadline for Resolutions for the Federation's Convention	Wednesday, October 4, 2006	
The C.L.C. Atlantic Region and P.E.I. Federation Educational	Thursday, October 12, 2006 8:30 am - 5:00 pm _____	Howard Johnson, Dutch Inn Deadline for Registration Thursday, September 28, 2006
Public Meeting on Medicare	Tuesday, October 24, 2006	7:30 p.m. Lecture Theatre, Colonel Gray High School, 175 Spring Park Road
Deadline for Nominations for Worker Representatives on the Workers Compensation Board of Directors,	Wednesday, October, 25, 2006. Before 4:30pm	
Electoral Reform Workshop to discuss Citizens Assembly	Saturday, October 28, 2006	12:45 to 4:30 pm at the St. Peter's Cathedral Hall, All Souls' Lane, near the Provincial Government Buildings in Charlottetown. Registration fee is \$5. To pre-register, call 569-1894 or 368-7591.
PEIFL Annual Convention	Friday and Saturday November 3 and 4, 2006	Howard Johnson, Dutch Inn
UPSE's Annual Convention	Friday and Saturday November 17 and 18, 2006	Delta Hotel, Charlottetown
National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women	Wednesday, December 6, 2006	